

## Interview H0215: with Shakabpa, Wangchug Denden [tib. zhwa sgab pa, dbang phyug bde ldan], (India, 1983) : Part No. 11 of 13

*W.D. Shakabpa was a very prominent aristocratic government official who held the rank of Tshipön. He is the author of "Tibet: A Political History." He talks about his trip to America, his work trying to start talks with the Chinese and his activities in India.*

Q

Did the lawyers come to you?

A

Yes, we didn't ask for the lawyer, but he came to us to say that it would be good to join the UN, but we didn't tell them that this would be good okay because we had been told to keep quite. However, I told them my opinion.

Q

In 1950, when you talked with the Americans, [question not finished]

A

At that time, I was in India.

Q

When you were in Kalimpong and met with Henderson and Nicholas Thatcher, you said, "My friends in Kham wanted to do something, and they send a message asking whether there would be any kind of hope for foreign support and what the situation was. At that time, Lhalu also wired the government and they wanted to do something in the summer of 1950 and the Queen of Derge [tib. sde dge btsun mo] and the King of Nangchen [tib. nang chen rgyal po] also wanted to oppose the Chinese. You wanted to have some kind of

Library of Congress  
Tibetan Oral History Archive Project (Asian Division)

movement for the Tibetans. You had those kinds of talk, but I am not clear about this. So how was the situation in Kham then?

A

At that time, we didn't know anything about what was happening in Kham. We just came to talk with the Chinese and we didn't hear anything about Kham.

Q

Didn't some Khambas come to India and tell you something?

A

At that time, they were reporting something recklessly in the newspapers saying that there were a lot of talks about spies in Kalimpong, but we didn't know about that. The journalists were also saying a lot that such and such happened in Kham. But we were not meddling in that and we were just doing whatever the government told us to do. At that time, there were some foreigners who came [to Kalimpong] who were said to have fled from Kham. Probably they had been talking a lot.

Q

When you talked with the American Government in India, they suggested that the American might be able to help the Tibetans with arms, but you should contact the Indians directly. Then if the Indians say no, then you should ask the Indians whether you could we get some arms from other countries. But it looks like that was never done. I don't quite understand why not?

A

That talk was really strange. We were sent to negotiate with the Chinese. How could that be if the people going to negotiate would order weapons? Such talk might have come out all of a sudden. We never meddled into those matters. I was thinking about trying to get the contacts to hold the talks. If we did something about making war and ordering weapons, then we would not be going to hold the talks.

Q

## Library of Congress

### Tibetan Oral History Archive Project (Asian Division)

Because it was inconvenient for you to do that, the Tibetan Government said that they sent Surkhang Rimshi and some others as a Trade Mission and to talk with the Indians. Surkhang Rimshi came but they never talked with the Americans.

A

Sending the Trade Mission was the conclusion of my work. I told Pandit Nehru that we needed to set up a Tibetan Representative [tib. sku tshab] in Delhi. Nehru said, "It is not okay to call it a "representative." You can call it the conclusion of trade [tib. tshong don mjug skyong]. Then I sent a telegram [to Lhasa] telling them to send a representative to India. This was delayed and then I went back to Tibet and came back to talk. Then the representative came to Delhi, but the Indian Government did not accept them. Then I went to the Foreign Office and told them that I had talked with Pandit Nehru and this is for the conclusion of trade. Then we were told that we could set it up in Kalimpong.

The Tibetan Government had to accept it. [unclear] The Dalai Lama also went back [to Tibet]. But as far as I was concerned, from the beginning I thought that I went to foreign countries and made relations to try to gain Tibet's independence. And when I talked with the Chinese, I had been talking exclusively about the independence of Tibet. We didn't think about any compromise. The Chinese caused a lot of trouble and told me that they will appoint me the Director of the Foreign Office [tib. phyi rgyal do dam] and they wanted me to come to Tibet, but I made excuses saying I am sick. So when the Chinese came to Tibet, I wasn't there.

Q

The Americans told the Dalai Lama not to accept the 17-Point Agreement and announce that this was signed without authorization and we will help in the UN and on everything. But an incident happened in [Yadong](#). In 1950-51, the Indians gave some arms to Tibet and trained some people in Gyantse. It seems that some people were doing their best to protect the country, but there were also some people pushing from inside because they were afraid of the Chinese. All of these things were happened in [Yadong](#).

A

Probably this happened in [Yadong](#). At that time I was in India. I went to [Yadong](#) to report on matters. After that I stayed in Kalimpong. Then all of a sudden, [Tibetan] delegates were sent to China to hold talks. When we had the war with the Chinese, the Tibetan

## Library of Congress

### Tibetan Oral History Archive Project (Asian Division)

Government sent a telegraph to me saying that you are not allowed to accept even a single article, but you have to go to China. I was told to go to China without any purpose [tib. don dag]. So I was supposed to go to China. Then I received the letters from the Tibetan Government and the Indian Government saying not to go to China. When I was in [Yadong](#), there were some troubles and talks, so I didn't stay there. By that time, the delegates were already sent.

Q

When the Dalai Lama was about to go back to Tibet, who were the people pushing him from outside?

A

Do you mean to push him back to Tibet?

Q

Yes.

A

There were two groups, one saying that he should go and other saying that he should stay. But I don't know that because I was in Kalimpong. I received a telegram saying that the Dalai Lama is going back and I went to see him off.

Q

At that time, who didn't go back from Kalimpong? Did [Sambo](#) stay there?

A

Sambo came from [Yadong](#) and stayed for a while and then he went back.

Q

In 1951, who was staying in Kalimpong? The Trade Mission was there, right?

A

Yes, Surkhang and Lobsang Tsewang [tib. blo bzang tshe dbang] were there as the Trade Mission. At that time, [Pandatsang](#) was the Governor of [Yadong](#) (tib. the [Yadong](#)

Library of Congress  
Tibetan Oral History Archive Project (Asian Division)

Jikhyab [gro mo spyi khyab]). He sometimes stayed in Kalimpong and sometimes in [Yadong](#). That's all it was.

Q

Liushar [tib. sne'u shar] was also there, right?

A

He was sent from [Yadong](#) when the Dalai Lama was there to talk about trade and also about the border.

Q

Ragashag was there, right?

A

No, he didn't come. He just came from Shigatse to [Yadong](#). Later, several years after the Chinese arrived, he went to Nepal as a representative.

Q

Surkhang [Sawang](#) returned back from Gyantse to Kalimpong.

A

There wasn't any [official] purpose for that. There was a talk that he went for medical treatment or something.

Q

How long did he stay there?

A

Probably, 1-2 months. He did not stay long.